



Malls are ingrained in our culture, but does it benefit culture? Modern malls cause many sustainability problems.

Matrix Post: Shopping Malls

American shopping malls provide an outlet for people to shop and also socialize, entertain, and has become an icon of American culture. Malls have help stimulate new holidays solely based on annual and semiannual sales. They have become an integral part of society and have influence multiple aspects of culture. Though it has become part of culture, does it promote sustainable aspects of culture? Features that are sustainability concerns within associated with malls include environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

The environmental sustainability problems created by malls extends from development to handling of waste. When building a mall, a large amount of land is needed; and not only for the mall itself but also the parking lot and surrounding necessities like banks and gas stations. By utilizing this space for malls, it cannot be used for housing or farming. Other environmental problems include pollution produced by individual retailers. Some products need special storage or are manufactured in malls and will use chemicals that release volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the air. Retail like this include leather products and food courts. Besides development and chemical emissions there is also transportation pollution from cars, inefficient energy use, and many other problems which contribute to the environmental sustainability concerns of malls.

Though malls are built with the purpose of gaining revenue, they can face many economic problems. There are areas dependent on malls for jobs and tax revenue, "for example, Montgomery County, Pa., gets as much as 50% of its tax revenue from the local King of Prussia mall" (Wachter, 2008). When being heavily dependent on one location for major funds, it creates devastating effects during a recession. In addition to the mall as a whole, stores within a mall have a difficult time staying in business due to expensive retail space costs and constant turn over. Stores can also face competition when selling in a mall causing more stress on the business to sell. Malls have become areas for large businesses to take over and leaves small, independent stores to fail. In conclusion, there are many factors which cause unsustainable economic problems in malls.

Lastly, malls have become a social outlet more than a retail area. This is a social sustainable issue because it is promoting unnecessary shopping habits and has become a critical portion of American lifestyle, including holidays. It is apparent in modern culture that people are buying more. They will buy in bulk or buy on clearance or sale to get the most for their money; inherently leading to consumerism. Within malls this is promoted by strategic sales and special events. One example that has expanded over the years is black Friday. It is one day of the year designed, for society, to shop. With people devoting their leisure time to malls, they are not taking advantage of other activities which can have more value than shopping. Therefore malls promote unsustainable practices that are seen within society.

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